



DISPATCH

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Task Force Liberty Soldiers Check Polling Sites for Coming Elections

Story and Photos by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey,
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FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Iraq –To ensure Iraqis in the Diyala Province are confident they can vote safely for the upcoming constitutional referendum and in the December national elections, Task Force Liberty Soldiers are keeping a close eye on the polling stations to make sure everything runs smoothly.

With the start of voter registration, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment and 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment stopped by five polling stations in Dali Abbas, Abu Sayda, Al-Wajhiya and Muqdadiyah.

The purpose of the mission was to make sure everything was under control by checking on security and addressing any concerns of the Iraqi election personnel, said 1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart, a native of York, Pa., and acting commander of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment.

"Everything that we saw was very positive," Brillhart said. "Iraqis were prepared to conduct the registration and Iraqi security forces had the scene secured at each location we went to, showing they don't need extensive Coalition involvement to set this off without a hitch."

Sergeant First Class Brain Kerkove, 1-30th and a native of Savvana, Ill., feels this is a positive step towards Iraqis taking back their country.

"They need to be able to feel confident enough to get out here and

vote," Kerkove said. "That way, they can go ahead and continue on with the constitution process and the elections coming up, so they can actually run their country without our help."

Brillhart said during the election process that all

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security will be conducted by Iraqi police at the polling sites and the Iraqi army in the vicinity as Coalition Forces are not allowed into the polling sites.

His Soldiers will provide a safety net should any incidents occur, he added.

"We are in the wings with a large (quick reaction force) and able to react to any one of the locations, should the need arise," he said. "Part of today's mission was a rehearsal of the routes to these locations."

At the polling sites, Brillhart was pleased with the seriousness of which the election personnel enforced the rules.

"They didn't allow anyone inside the registration sites except to register including the Coalition Forces that were there," said Brillhart. "They talked to us in areas that were neutral and away from the actual registration areas, so it was good to see that they see the concept of the fair election and they're doing their best to abide by those rules."

After visiting the five polling stations Brillhart and his men are confident the people in the Diyala Province are well on their way to building a better, democratic Iraq.

"It shows they're taking the key first steps towards establishing a democracy that they can elect their own leaders without interference and without aid from the Coalition."



1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment, Task Force Liberty talks with an Iraqi police Officer outside a polling station in Al-Wajhiya.

Soldiers Build Playground Equipment for Iraqi Orphanage

by 116th BCT
Public Affairs

KIRKUK, Iraq – Children at one orphanage here now have a playground full of new equipment, thanks to Headquarters Company of the 116th Brigade Combat Team's Task Force 2-116 Armor.

While assessing a Kirkuk orphanage in March, the unit noticed run-down playground equipment inadequate for the number of children at the orphanage. One metal worker in the group, Sgt. Fenton Doyle, decided to use his talent to build new equipment.

"Sgt. Doyle spent his spare time gathering and welding scrap metal, constructing several toys for the children of the orphanage," said Capt. Corey Dahlquist, a Task Force 2-116 personnel officer. Doyle used old rims and half-shafts from military vehicles to build two spring toys. He built a slide to replace the broken one and a six-foot swing and swing set using old mud flaps for seats. He also built a set of monkey bars using scrap steel and half-shafts. "The Soldiers of headquarters company painted all of these items and assisted in the delivery and installation of the toys," said Dahlquist.

"The local children in the neighborhood all wanted a chance to try out the new equipment

while the Soldiers were there installing it. Many of them couldn't wait for it to be installed, but just jumped right on."

Assessing and meeting the needs of communities is part of the 116th Brigade Combat Team's mission.



Children jump on two new spring toys before their installation at the orphanage in Kirkuk.



Soldiers from Headquarters Company swing Iraqi children on their new swing set.



Soldiers from Headquarters Company watch Iraqi children dangle from their new monkey bars after the installation.

The Life of a Working Dog

by 116th BCT
Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Iraq – Most days, the life of a military working dog is a routine of watching their trainer shaking hands with people and standing watch over an area, but occasionally these highly trained K-9s are called upon to do much more.

With the help of a volunteer, Sgt. Randall Pyell of Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 116th Brigade Combat Team (BCT), Task Force Liberty, the dog's handlers, Sr. Airman Scott Zorn and Staff Sgt. Danny Spaide were able to give a demonstration of their dog's two basic capabilities; to detect explosives and to attack and subdue a suspect.

Zorn's dog, Aldo, showed how a working dog can become an attack dog, chasing down a fleeing man and locking onto Sgt. Pyell's padded left arm. While being searched, the 'suspect' shoved Zorn away, and again, Aldo had Pyell by the arm. The suspect then ran away, but thought better of it, stopping and surrendering before Aldo could reach him. Right on cue, Aldo ran past him, then returned to sit and watch him until his trainer could catch up to search the individual. Lastly, Aldo escorted Pyell back. Every time the volunteer moved in a direction other than where he was supposed to go, Aldo began barking and leaping toward the individual, forcing him to correct his course.

Spaide's dog, Britt, demonstrated his chase-down technique, latching onto the suspect's arm, though Zorn assured the onlookers that the dogs would grab onto anything if they had to. The next anonymous volunteer suspect found out what it was like as Britt caught him by the arm and detained him.

The next demonstration came when Zorn padded up and tried escape to a waiting vehicle, jumped in, but suddenly found Britt jumping through the window and sitting in his lap, his arm locked in Britt's jaw.

Lastly, Zorn ran to a Humvee, attempting to climb too high for Britt to follow. Fearlessly, the animal jumped onto the vehicle, catching Zorn in a vise-like grip, stubbornly refusing to let go.

"[We are] very proud to have all of them as members of our team," said Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Ahlm of HHC, 116th BCT.

"The dogs are highly trained professionals," explained Spaide. "They've gone through difficult obstacle courses to learn to overcome all fear of chasing down a suspect."

Britt also demonstrated his keen sense of smell at locating explosives by finding a small, concealed jar of composition B – a favorite type of explosive used by terrorists. Britt alerted his trainer to the location of the explosive in the wheel well of the vehicle.

If you happen to pass these four-footed Soldiers and their trainers on the street, be sure to stop and say hello to them ... just don't try to run away.

